Forecast by USA for import of wheat by India

527. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in July 2005, Food and Agricultural Services of U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasted that India will import one Million tonne of wheat;

(b) if so, the basis of this forecast;

(c) whether Government have taken any cognigence of the forecast;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Articles carrying the USDA forecast that India is expected to import one million tonnes (estimated) of wheat did feature in some of the reports/publications on commodities trade. This forecast was done on the basis of lower carrying stock and strong consumption leading to tight supply position and strengthening of domestic prices. The rising consumption has been attributed to high population growth and changes in the dietary habits, with increasing urbanization and higher consumer income.

(c) to (e) The Government makes its own independent assessment, based on estimations of production, procurement and off take, trade feedback and inputs from other related agencies such as the above-referred forecast. The recent decision to import bulk wheat on Government account has primarily been resorted to because of the shortfall in procurement of wheat in the last procurement season and the need to keep the stocks as per the prescribed buffer norms.

Pending rail projects

528. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of rail projects are still pending;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) whether some State Governments have requested the Central Government to complete the railway projects in their States;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the reaction of the Central Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) As per budget 2006-07, there are 348 railway projects under Planheads New Line, Gauge Conversion, Doubling, Railway Electrification and Metropolitan Transport appearing in the Budget Documents. Out of these projects, 88 projects have already been completed. Statewise details of ongoing projects is given in Statement. (See Below)

(c) to (e) There have been demands from various State Governments for increase in allocation of funds to various projects. The funds during 2006-07 have increased considerably over the previous years. However, in view of huge throwforward of ongoing projects and constraint of resources, State Governments have been requested for sharing cost of the new line and gauge conversion projects in their States to the extent of atleast 50% so as to expedite their completion.

Statement

State-wise details of ongoing Rail Projects

State	Total no. of projects
Andhra Pradesh	21
Assam & North-East States	11
Bihar	36
Chhattisgarh	6
Delhi	5
Gujarat	10
Haryana	10
Himachal Pradesh	3
Jammu & Kashmir	2

State	Total no. of projects
Jharkhand	9
Karnataka	19
Kerala	13
Madhya Pradesh	10
Maharastra	18
Orissa	20
Punjab	6
Rajasthan	14
Tamil Nadu	20
Uttar Pradesh	41
Uttranchal	3
West Bengal	26

Projects falling in more than one State has been shown in all States through which the projects pass.

Pending projects

529. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a huge backlog of unfinished gauge conversion and newline projects which require 15 years and 38 years to complete going by the present rate of funding;

(b) whether the total estimated cost of these pending projects has risen to more than Rs. 55,000 crores whereas the outlay for these projects for 2005-06 is a mere Rs. 1342 crores; and

(c) whether after obtaining 'out-of-turn' approval from Parliament during 2000 to 2005, Railways did not take up 50 out of 67 road over/under bridges projects till March, 2005?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The throwforward of ongoing new line and gauge conversion projects as on 1.4.2006 is about Rs. 40,000 crores. During 2005-06, an outlay